

Barth Society met in Atlanta November 21-22, 2003

Our meeting in Atlanta, Georgia featured a Friday afternoon session from 4:00 P.M. to 6:30 P.M. and a Saturday morning session from 9:00 A.M. to 11:30 A.M. The theme of the Friday afternoon session was *Barth's Ecclesiology Reconsidered*. The presenter was Nicholas Healy, St. John's University, New York. The respondents were John Yocum, Oxford University and Kimlyn Bender, Sioux Falls University. The theme of the Saturday morning session was *Colin E. Gunton in Memoriam*. Papers in tribute to his work were presented by Robert Jensen, Center of Theological Inquiry and John Webster, University of Aberdeen.

At a meeting of the Executive on Sunday November 23, 2003 George Hunsinger of Princeton Theological Seminary was appointed President of the Barth Society while Philip Ziegler of the Atlantic School of Theology, Halifax was appointed Secretary. The Membership Secretary and Editor of the Newsletter remains Paul Molnar of St. John's University. The Executive expressed a deep debt of gratitude to Ron Goetz and David Demson for their many years of devoted service to the Barth Society in the positions of President and Secretary, respectively. Both Ron and David of course will remain on the Executive.

What follows are summaries of the papers presented at the November meeting.

Nicholas Healy

"Karl Barth's Ecclesiology Reconsidered"

The title of Healy's paper reflects the fact that he has reconsidered his past criticisms leveled at Barth's ecclesiology so that he now intends to consider Barth's thinking in relation to criticisms of Barth offered by Stanley Hauerwas and Reinhard Hütter. Healy thinks these theologians disagree with Barth and that any misreading on their part results from that rather than from misunderstanding him.

According to Healy, Hauerwas in his book *With the Grain of the Universe* and Barth in his *Church Dogmatics* agree that witness is the primary function of the church. But Hauerwas criticizes Barth for not acknowledging that the community is "constitutive of the gospel proclamation," and thus Barth is "insufficiently catholic". For Hauerwas Barth never quite explains "how our human agency is involved in the Spirit's work" so that in Hauerwas's view Barth's vision of the church is overly cautious—Barth can't quite explain how we become part of God's care for the world through the church. Healy believes Hauerwas employs a type of "ecclesiological apologetics" instead of a natural theological apologetics in order to show that the truth proclaimed by the church is true—not as evidence—but as part of its claim. Hauerwas is said to believe that the truth of Christian convictions depends upon the faithfulness of the church, not in the sense that Christianity would be proven false by our unfaithfulness but in the sense that the church should be able to produce faithful Christians.

Reinhard Hütter in his book *Suffering Divine Things* contrasts "poietic theology" or constructive theology that is a product of the theological imagination operating independently of the church (found in extreme forms in Kaufman and McFague) with his own view which advocates a theology that is "bound and obedient to the doctrines and practices of the church". Strangely, Barth is said to have come close to the poietic side because of a weakness in his pneumatology: his view of the Spirit has no created referent similar to the created referent offered in his Christology (Christ's humanity). Hence by stressing the event character of our relations with the Spirit, Barth's view of the church embodies a kind of "spiritualistic individualism" that comes dangerously close to poietic theology. Hütter's alternative is a "public church" with its doctrines and practices as linked to the Holy Spirit with the result that the practices of the church are seen as "works" of the Spirit. Since the Spirit is the subject of what is humanly accomplished in the church, we are seen to be "appropriately passive," that is, "suffering divine things". While we act humanly in the church, it is really only the Spirit that is constitutive. Doctrines and practices are the "concrete incarnation" in which the Holy Spirit operates.

Healy then explores Barth's theology, especially in *CD III/3*, *IV/1*, *IV/3* and *The Christian Life*, to see just how these three theologians differ and what that might mean for us. First, he indicates that for Barth there can be no "private" Christianity because we are called by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ. Barth thus sees the church's action as a genuine and ongoing history of action in and for the world—it is not a continuing incarnation—but it does correspond to Christ's own history. The church, for Barth, exists in partnership with

God in faith, obedience and prayer. For Barth the church “may be a travesty of his [Christ’s] existence, but as his earthly-historical form of existence it can never perish. It can as little lose its being as he can lose his”.

With regard to pneumatology, Barth insisted that Christian faith should not be equated with Christianity or the Christian religion. Barth’s view of the Spirit, according to Healy, receives less emphasis than Christology and specifically functions in *CD IV* to stress the material dependence of doctrine on Christology. But Barth’s view of the Spirit is different from Hütter’s because for Barth the Spirit is not bound to created things; it comes to us from above and not from us. The Spirit holds together what is different and is free. Thus, while the church teaches and directs our action “neither the Word nor the Spirit are bound to the church”. It is the other way around. The church’s role in our obedience therefore is limited by the fact that God’s actions on our behalf are not at all dependent upon us. For Barth then Christian practices can never become ends in themselves—such thinking would obscure the reality of election. So one could never equate our witness with the idea that the church produces people who can demonstrate that Christianity works successfully by their actions. Because God acting in Christ is the center of the Christian life all actions in the church are true only as they point away from themselves and toward him. The church’s existence is not an end in itself. Because the church is “God’s church, the work of Word and Spirit” everything else, however important, is secondary. The church exists for the world.

Healy concludes that Barth has an adequate view of the way Christians are enabled by grace to see things differently and participate in world history differently. But Healy says that for Hauerwas and Hütter, Barth does not go far enough because he believed that God can be known only through God so that church practices are only “relatively necessary” and not “absolutely necessary”. God and God’s grace really remain free for Barth.

Healy wonders what kinds of questions might Barth have asked of Hauerwas and says that Hauerwas seems to think that “Christianity is mostly about living within a particular narrative” so that one might acquire “the politics of Jesus”. Hauerwas thus spends more time on church practices and less on the work of God’s Word and Spirit, though he presupposes the importance of God’s Word and Spirit. But Healy thinks Barth would want to see Hauerwas make clearer the difference God makes to the church. Healy does not so much wish to criticize Hauerwas, who he believes has contributed mightily to the church, but to indicate that accounts of the church and its activities that are formulated independently of its central doctrines tend to ignore the importance of the Holy Spirit as the one who constitutes proper ecclesial action in the first place. Barth might also wonder whether or not efforts to recover ecclesial politics might not suppose that the church is an end in itself; Healy thinks this may result from a nontheological understanding of the church so that the church then is

presented unintentionally in anti-Christian ways. Following this thought of Barth, Healy suspects that contemporary accounts of the church that do not have robust versions of God’s activity for, in and through it, seem to think of the church’s role primarily as educational. This is where Barth’s view of witness sets off his concept of the church against that of Hauerwas’s view: for Barth because a witness declares, explicates and applies the Gospel which is Christ himself, the church cannot initially be equated with a particular kind of life or a particular kind of practice. God’s free action makes a vital, if hidden, difference for Barth. What is truly distinctive about the church, for Barth, is neither its narrative nor its practice, but the fact that God’s Word and Spirit operate within it in a way that challenges both narrative and practice.

With regard to Hütter, Barth might wonder just what difference Hütter’s pneumatology really makes for his ecclesiology since his view of the church, as centered authoritatively on doctrines and practices, is essentially a nontheological account of the church. “It simply confirms it as the Spirit authorizes the church’s doctrines and core practices, rendering them unequivocal and immutable”. Healy notes that Barth was uneasy with any attempt, Lutheran or other, to make the Gospel and the scriptural witness to it an object we can investigate and control. Barth might find Hütter’s view of the church somewhat reductive although in a different way from Hauerwas because, while Hütter has a more developed view of the Spirit, the Spirit’s activity along with the Word is severely limited, so that the church is seen as an end in itself. Healy suggests that both Hauerwas and Hütter make the church seem less of an adventure than it really is or should be. Healy laments the fact that too many descriptions of the church today have an earnest, methodical and educational tone suggesting a priestly or pedagogical character instead of a prophetic character which Barth would consider more appropriate.

Healy proposes that much contemporary ecclesiology exhibits a type of anxiety about its own self-preservation that might not occur if it were more concerned with the task and cause of God than with itself. He believes that this merely perpetuates forms of liberalism: “we move ecclesiology to the center of our attention, where it becomes the center or ground of theology”. When this happens, even some of the views of the Trinity and Christology used to support those views are less traditional than they are asserted to be. Most importantly, however, contemporary ecclesiology will not face the fact of the church’s sinfulness. Healy contends that Barth clearly saw that self-preservation, as an ultimate value for the world, placed the world in contrast to the church; the church while constantly in need of self-criticism, cannot be anxious about itself because the church knows that it is preserved in all it is and does by God’s Word and Spirit acting within it. Hence the greatest threat to the church today, according to Healy, is that it will fail to call upon the Spirit in prayerful obedience to the Word. Barth believed that

God's Word and Spirit must always be seen as founding and maintaining the church in truth so that the church's practices are important but not constitutive of the church. While Barth can be criticized for his "unconvincing" sacramental theology, Healy suggests that the church will be less anxious if and when it realizes that God really is at work there in our actions and that because God providentially cares for the whole world which the church serves, there may even be times when the world understands the church better than it understands itself. Healy notes that in the end, dissent within the church might be a good thing that is prompted by the Spirit pushing the church to consider again its true basis, cause and task so that instead of cutting short discussions of our disagreements over practices and doctrines, we should live with them without anxiety until we see clearly God's will and purpose. Most of all, of course, the church lives without anxiety because it lives joyfully in the knowledge of faith that God's Word and Spirit will preserve the church in its prayer and obedience so that it can act towards the world as a witness to the Father's love revealed in the sending of his Son for its salvation. Then, instead of being primarily concerned with its own self-preservation, it will again be a true witness of the Gospel in the world.

John Yocum

"Response to Nicholas Healy"

After expressing his appreciation for Healy's presentation, John Yocum observed that both ecclesiology and theology in general suffer from anxiety created by an apologetic agenda which might easily obscure the central role of divine action in church proclamation. In that regard he insists that Healy's presentation of Hauerwas's view that for Barth our task is to "make Christianity attractive" through witness must be carefully connected to Barth's insistence that it is only in prayer that true witness takes place either in proclamation or in love of neighbor because prayer allows Jesus Christ to work for and to us and our neighbor. Yocum notes that talk of the church as a habitable world or a followable narrative is plausible from a sociological perspective but can reduce the church to an idea as seems to occur in Radical Orthodoxy. For Barth theology has to do with the communion between "God and man" established and maintained by God himself in Christ and through the Holy Spirit in which two distinct subjects remain. Yocum thinks that for Hütter the church comes close to being viewed incorrectly as an incarnation of the Spirit. Still, he thinks Hauerwas rightly criticized Barth for never really explicating how human agency is involved in the work of the Spirit and so he hopes that Healy would not entirely abandon his early critique of Barth on this point.

Yocum believes one can best see what Barth is "up to" by exploring *CD IV* where he thinks Barth is quietly debating with Bultmann and more explicitly with Roman Catholicism (Marian dogma, *ex opere operato*, infalli-

bility, the hierarchical view of the church). Barth also opposed "cultural Protestantism" and, in Yocum's view, Barth's opposition to "pronounced confessionalism and clericalism" led him to "de-sacramentalize" church proclamation in *CD IV*. According to Yocum, Barth's strong distinction between divine and human agency, unlike the NT, did not leave much room for God to act through humanity precisely because he saw them as competitive in a way that Thomas Aquinas did not, as for instance in the four marks of the church. Barth's weakness is illustrated by his refusal to find a "causal link between divine and human action within the covenant". This mistake stands out in Barth's late sacramental doctrine which, as both Healy and Yocum note, is at odds with his earlier views. This contrasts again with Hütter's view that Barth's conception of divine/human relations in *CD IV* is consistent with his earlier views. And Yocum is not convinced by Hütter's critique of Barth's use of *Seinsweise* in his doctrine of the Trinity. Again, Yocum thinks Barth's error in his sacramental theology results from eliminating a causal link between divine and human agents.

This link Yocum thinks was better maintained by Thomas Aquinas, and Yocum suggests that George Hunsinger's account of divine and human agency seems remarkably similar to Thomas Aquinas's view of instrumental causality. Yocum believes that if attention is focused on Barth's earlier view of Baptism in *The Teaching of the Church Regarding Baptism*, then these two views could be harmoniously connected for a more satisfying view of divine and human activity. The life of the church might then be seen as "one long epiclesis". Yocum contends that theologians such as Louis Bouyer, Yves Congar and Henri de Lubac offer promise for contemporary ecclesiology influenced by Barth.

Kimlyn Bender

"Response to Nicholas Healy"

In an attempt to be provocative and generate thought, Kimlyn Bender argued that Barth's theology and ecclesiology are worth returning to again and again. Bender appreciated Healy's paper but mainly wanted to respond to the views of Hauerwas and Hütter. He thinks Hauerwas criticizes Barth for not being Roman Catholic enough and in response insists that we must follow Barth's understanding of the church in its three dimensions. He also thinks Hauerwas has confused Christ with the church and asserts that Barth has an ecclesiological *extra calvinisticum* while Hauerwas does not.

According to Bender, Hütter is a true Lutheran. But Hütter is wrong to accuse Barth of subjectivism. Barth would question Hütter's belief that the church is binding and thinks Hütter has lost the meaning of the *sola scriptura* and has indeed confused the Spirit with the church. He thinks Hütter's ecclesiology is in danger of

Eutychnianism and argues for a more critical function for scripture in the church.

Bender offers some modest criticisms of Healy saying that Healy did not lay out resources to get at the issues. Bender notes that Barth's ecclesiology is always formulated with a view toward Catholic, Protestant and Lutheran alternatives and suggests that Healy's paper could be misconstrued as a return to a general ecclesiology rather than special ecclesiology. Bender's key point is to stress that we should not have to choose between the visible and invisible church. Bender wants to know how we can properly construe the relation of Christ and the church without confusing them. He contends that for Barth the church is a mystery to be believed and that needs to be stressed, so that the church's meaning will not be found directly in its visible structures, or relegated merely to some invisible realm. Bender also notes that Barth would not have accepted the account of divine/human agency offered by Thomas Aquinas because Barth's view is, as John Webster has shown, a correspondence view.

After the presentation of the papers an interesting and stimulating discussion of the issues followed until the session adjourned at 6:30 P.M.

Colin Gunton In Memoriam Robert Jenson

According to Robert Jenson, Gunton was not a Barth scholar in a specific way; he happily inhabited the situation Barth created but also disagreed with Barth and was a driven theologian. Jenson mentioned that Colin Gunton had been at CTI during 2002 working on a systematic theology saying that in a few months he nearly finished the whole first volume which eventually would be edited and published.

Jenson's presentation reported on Gunton's last writing project just mentioned which was entitled "The Triune God: the Doctrine of God as though Jesus makes a Difference". First, he discusses the triune economy, then the triune being, then the triune adjectives. There is no prolegomena. Gunton accepts Barth's idea of the root of the doctrine of the Trinity. Gunton's chief authority is Irenaeus, with his view of the two hands of God. Gunton offers a brief biblical theology along with fierce determination not to discuss theological epistemics, not to be seduced by any dialectic and not in any way to be led away from the economy. Because he is intent on beginning with the economy, Gunton starts with the Spirit and thus explores the Spirit in the economy, the economy of the Son and the economy of the Father with a view toward forming his theology around the Spirit rather than around the Son. For Gunton the Spirit is God's perfecting hand that carries creation to its fulfillment. The Spirit preserves the difference between

each and every creature. Scriptural authority is found in the Spirit who inspires and guides the church toward its end. For Gunton the human Jesus is the divine Son. That is what makes Christian faith dogmatic—it must look at the particular to understand the universal. Gunton follows John Zizioulas for his view of the Father and argues that Israel and the church are cultures among the cultures so that theology is to be seen as an intellectual aspect of the church's living culture.

Staying close to the economy, Gunton focuses on Christology with the idea that God works in the economy. Jesus as the universal Logos of God is the key—Gunton completely rejects the *extra calvinisticum* and attempts to combine Cyril with a radical Reformed theology. In Gunton's view there is no material sharing of the two natures in Christ. He relies on John Owen to say the only thing the Logos does is become identical with his humanity. Jesus saves by the Spirit resting on him. This is not an adoptionism Jenson insists. While Gunton completely rejects the *Logos Asarkos*, according to Jenson, he still thinks it is necessary to suppose that an event occurs in which he is the Son in advance and apart from Jesus. This could be characterized as a pattern of movement toward the incarnation. There is no Logos without his orientation to humanity—being directed outward belongs to the eternal Logos. In his determination to stick to the economy, Gunton rejects the Thomistic doctrine that the Son is just a subsistent relation because scripture does not say a relation became incarnate. For Gunton, according to Jenson, the substance of God is the three persons and nothing else. God's being is constituted in and through their personal relations—the substance is not relationality but the three persons. Finally, Jenson notes that Gunton follows Pannenberg by not restricting relations to relations of origin and so suggests that we might think of the Son as begotten by the Spirit. What then are the triune relations? They are: the grace of our Lord and the love of the Father and the *koinonia* of the Holy Spirit; in other words the eternal *perichoresis* of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is the substance of the one God.

John Webster "Gunton and Barth"

John Webster began noting that his paper would be, in part, a conversation with Colin Gunton about Barth's theology that he was never able to have because Gunton was so immersed in thinking and speaking about God that often their conversations were of the type that "one speaks and the other listens".

Webster noted that Barth was very influential in Gunton's intellectual formation, even though he parted company with Barth increasingly with the passing years. In the 1960's Barth offered to Gunton and other British theologians an important alternative to those who thought the only proper business of doctrinal criticism was that we could no longer believe the Christian

doctrines. Gunton knew that Barth accomplished what the doctrinal criticism school presumed could not be done: he inhabited “the modern world with Christian intellectual freedom”. Colin Gunton mainly relied on the Barth of the *CD* with some reference to his earlier writings, especially *Romans*. Gunton’s views of Barth were shaped in the course of his dissertation on Barth and Hartshorne and showed the influence of Torrance and Jenson as well as Jüngel, Balthasar, and Lutheran and Roman Catholic critics. He learned that the “sheer conceptual prowess of the *Church Dogmatics*,” offered “a capacity unsurpassed by any modern theologian to give a commanding account of the Christian gospel on its own terms”.

Gunton did not intend to be a specialist on Barth or anyone else since he was a “constructive theologian”. That explains why he liked Barth’s *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century*; it employed strictly theological criteria in conversation with the theologians of the period. Gunton had his likes (Irenaeus, the Cappadocians via Zizioulas, Owen, Coleridge) and dislikes (that dreadful North African bishop, that Dominican who never read the Bible). Though he could be tendentious, as with Augustine, Gunton was a careful reader who saw systematic theology more as a matter of weighing and balancing doctrines than organizing them into a system. Gunton worried that Barth’s *CD* was imbalanced, giving more weight to some doctrines over others and perhaps even using the wrong doctrine to accomplish a task, while perhaps too easily accepting the Western view of the Gospel.

While Barth never ignored philosophy, he was nervous that focusing on philosophy could lead to “*mixophilosophicotheologia*” and usually stuck to dogmatics. Colin Gunton was freer in that regard, though even as a philosophical theologian he was a theologian and not a philosopher, as was evident in his *The One, The Three and The Many*. And he once described his trinitarian theology as “a quest for ontology” because he thought we could understand ourselves only by understanding God’s being. He worried that Barth’s concentration on election and reconciliation kept him from engaging with the reality of the creaturely world. While Barth was intensely focused, Gunton was more interested in tracing the ramifications of the Gospel for the material and cultural world, especially as seen through the lens of trinitarian and pneumatological teaching.

Gunton’s primary theological concern was always how to relate time and eternity in a way that would neither compromise God’s sovereignty nor the world’s relative independence. In *Becoming and Being* (1978) Gunton worked out their different views of God with greater rigor than anything he later wrote and concluded that Barth’s holding together God’s being and act offered more promise than traditional theism or Hartshorne’s replacement. Like Jüngel, Gunton saw in Barth a way beyond the false split between a static, unrelated divine transcendence, and a collapsing of the divine into a

general ontology of change. And this affected all his later work. Even early on, however, Gunton had questions about Barth, perhaps urged on him by his own *Doktorvater*, Robert Jenson. Was Barth more concerned with what had already happened and could Barth’s view of the Spirit allow God to be free enough with respect to a proper understanding of the development of doctrine? While Barth is said to have a view of eternity which is not seen as the negation of time and is not defined in opposition to time but rather as its “affirmation and fulfillment and as its judge,” he is also said to have failed to maintain “the full temporal reality of the revelation event”. Barth contaminated the temporality of revelation with the idea of revelation as a “timeless theophany”. Barth’s weaknesses, which were seen on three fronts, remained concerns of Gunton’s later work as well: 1) as Barth was oriented to the past “no significant future divine history” would be allowed; 2) he neglected the Holy Spirit; and 3) he displayed a lack of interest in the humanity of Jesus.

Looking more systematically at Gunton’s analysis of Barth Webster thinks that Barth did not have an adequate theology of mediation. In his last work, *Act and Being* Gunton argued that the acts of the Son and Spirit cannot be seen as vertical interruptions of the created order because the “Son and Spirit mediate the Father’s action, and do so from within the structures of creation and not simply externally or at a distance”. Gunton opposed the “platonizing tendency” to sharply distinguish the sensible and intelligible realms which he saw illustrated paradigmatically in Augustine. Gunton’s concept of mediation sought to avoid the dualism that would either keep God from relating with us in creation or collapse God into creation. Barth’s significance, according to Gunton, lay in refusing to think dualistically and in trying to get beyond both Augustine and the Enlightenment, by thinking christologically and in a trinitarian way. Yet Barth’s thinking could not finally “shake itself free from the separation of God and creaturely time” because of the three propensities mentioned above.

The biggest weakness Gunton finds in Barth is his doctrine of the Spirit. This causes Barth to seek some direct communication from God and neglect the mediatedness of revelation by reducing the Spirit merely to “internal Word”. Gunton usually traced Barth’s inadequacy to Augustine and then offered counter examples in Owen and Edward Irving. Hence, Gunton objected: 1) to the “*ontological* subordination of the Spirit to the Son” because this inhibits identifying the Spirit’s own persona; 2) inadequate attention to the Spirit acting in and towards creation; 3) “an undertow which drags Christian doctrine back to the past and so inhibits the Spirit’s eschatological role as the ‘perfecting cause of the creation’”. Gunton was regularly critical of Barth’s preference for *Seinsweise* and tried to set the record straight in his “occasionally grumpy ‘Epilogue’” to the second edition of *Becoming and Being* by wondering whether or not the personal should not be “that *in terms of which* other things are understood”. Yet, Webster

notes, Barth would challenge such reasoning as the “arrival of a general metaphysic”. For Gunton it was necessary that “the particularity of the persons can be established as *beings*, centres of distinctive kinds of action;” he disapproved the principle *opera trinitatis ad extra indivisa*; and he was intent on removing any hint that divine personhood could be associated with divine unity. From this perspective Barth’s doctrine of the Trinity must appear inadequate. While Gunton praised Barth’s event-ontology in the first edition of *Becoming and Being* as helpful against process pantheism, twenty years later he was no longer convinced, because such thinking might direct our attention away from the “priority of the persons” in God’s being. While Gunton says Barth is not a modalist, it is not clear why he believes this; in fact, according to Webster, Gunton was “seriously at loggerheads with Barth’s pneumatology” concerning the place of the Spirit in the immanent Trinity and the Spirit’s role in creation and redemption.

According to Webster, Gunton’s mature work reserved for the Spirit the role of perfecting agent within creation; this was most clearly and perhaps problematically expressed in *The One, The Three and the Many*. Here the Spirit acts to maintain the “particularity, distinctiveness, uniqueness, through the Son, of each within the unity”. Gunton’s pneumatology, of course, led him to criticize Barth, who he believed saw the Spirit’s relation to Jesus as “more causal compulsion than liberation for action,” precisely because he failed to offer a proper view of the Spirit in the sending of the Son and in the constitution of and maintenance of Jesus’ humanity. Barth then is said to focus too much on Jesus’ divinity and not on his free human activity. This, according to Webster, is an extraordinary judgment that does not square with Barth’s position in *CD IV*. But Gunton also criticizes Barth’s view of the Virgin Birth and his presentation of Jesus’ human priesthood, although for Webster, Barth was legitimately attempting to maintain the union and distinction of the Word and Jesus’ humanity in the incarnation, while Gunton thought this obscured the saving significance of “Jesus’ Spirit-directed humanity”. For Gunton, Barth’s view of the Virgin Birth stresses God’s activity *toward* us rather than for us within creation, while his view of Jesus’ human exercise of his priesthood is lost in the process. And because of his supposedly inadequate pneumatology, Barth is not able to give due weight to Jesus’ human freedom and identity; the world becomes too much a function of God’s presence to it and does not have enough of its own autonomy. For Webster this is a “considerably foreshortened account of Barth which ought not to go unchallenged” and indeed has been challenged, he thinks, ably by Paul Molnar in *Divine Freedom and the Doctrine of the Immanent Trinity*. Gunton’s critique of Barth here is the logical outworking of his original criticisms outlined in *Becoming and Being*.

Gunton was also uneasy with Barth’s view of creation because he thought that his doctrine of election

merely made the covenant the logical outworking of God’s eternal pre-temporal determination so that election and not fellowship determined Barth’s thought. Barth’s view of creation, Christology and redemption was “caught in the briars of Neo-Platonism and its divorce of the eternal from the temporal” and can be released only in a properly understood doctrine of the Trinity with due emphasis on pneumatology.

How then does Webster evaluate these developments in Gunton’s thought? Gunton’s conception of a theologian is of one who is open, free and wide-ranging; one who listens carefully but not too long “to his masters” and then decides for himself; one who takes responsibility without hiding behind tradition. Barth would have enjoyed Gunton’s independence, even though Gunton himself incorrectly implied that Barth the theologian was like someone who “burrowed around for something he already knows to be there”. While Gunton learned from Barth that the doctrine of God, rightly understood, affects all areas of theology, he also thought that Barth’s theology did not properly hold together divine and creaturely freedom because of difficulties in his view of the Trinity and in his pneumatology already mentioned. Webster remains unpersuaded because he does not agree with Gunton’s criticisms which he thinks stem from generalizations he makes of Barth’s theology, especially his view that Barth was a Platonist.

According to Webster, Gunton seriously underestimated how important time and history were for Barth because Gunton detached Barth’s statements about God’s eternal decision from his equal emphasis on God’s freedom for fellowship with us. Barth maintained the creaturely particularity Gunton sought in pneumatology precisely in and through his doctrine of election arguing that God’s self-election is to life in partnership with creatures through their active lives of obedience. It is not that Gunton was unaware of this, he simply did not allow this to shape his judgments about Barth’s theology, possibly because he associated Barth too much with those features of Augustine’s theology he deplored. And he ignored Barth’s important engagement with Reformed historical and confessional theology that led him to emphasize God’s “non-reversible yet utterly real” covenantal relations with us in history.

According to Webster, Gunton was skeptical of the Reformed emphasis on the priority of the divine nature over the incarnate one and what he took to be its docetic tendencies. Agreeing with Molnar’s analysis, Webster argues that Gunton’s criticisms of Barth in this regard are based on a separation of the Word and Spirit which “gives little room to the Word’s continuing activity” and thus are largely misplaced. Barth’s emphasis on traditional Christology (subtle and not uncritical as it was) did not really endanger Jesus’ humanity but secured it. And when Gunton criticized Barth for saying “It is one thing to speak of the humanity of God and another to speak of the humanity of Jesus Christ” Webster insists that it really is not—such a statement suggests that one needs to believe that Jesus’ humanity somehow needs to

be protected from the action of the Word to have integrity. While Gunton never fell into adoptionism and exemplarism in his Christology, his failure to offer a full theology of the Son of God weakened his ability to avoid these difficulties. Nonetheless, Webster maintains that systematic theology owes an enormous debt to Colin Gunton because he gave intellectual and rhetorical weight to the task of constructive Christian theology when many believed it was redundant. Finally, Webster noted how much poorer we are now that that both Colin Gunton and the late George Schner (his closest intellectual friends) have been taken from us.

In addition to papers yet to be finalized for the Friday afternoon session of the Barth Society Meeting in San Antonio, Texas on November 19-20, 2004, the Saturday morning session will feature the important new book entitled *Karl Barth & the Pietists: The Young Karl Barth's Critique of Pietism and Its Response* by Eberhard Busch, trans. Daniel W. Bloesch, foreword Donald W. Dayton (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004). More information on the November meeting will appear in the fall Newsletter.

Karl Barth Online Bibliography

The Center for Barth Studies at Princeton Theological Seminary and the *Zeitschrift für dialektische Theologie* at the Theological University of Kampen (ThUK) announce an online bibliography of literature by and about the Swiss-German theologian Karl Barth (1886-1968). The bibliography may be freely accessed at www.barthresearch.org. The purpose of this online bibliography is to support and promote the study of the theology of Karl Barth. If you have published a recent book or article about Barth, please contact Clifford Anderson, Curator of Reformed Research Collections in Special Collections, Princeton Theological Seminary P. O. Box 111, Princeton NJ 08542-0111, email: barth.studies@ptsesm.edu.

New Books on Barth's Theology

Clearing a Space for Human Action: Ethical Ontology in the Theology of Karl Barth by Archibald James Spencer, Issues

In Systematic Theology Volume 10 (New York: Peter Lang, 2003).

Admiration & Challenge: Karl Barth's Theological Relationship with John Calvin by Sung Wook Chung (New York: Peter Lang, 2003).

Karl Barth & the Pietists: The Young Karl Barth's Critique of Pietism and Its Response by Eberhard Busch, trans. by Daniel W. Bloesch, foreword by Donald W. Dayton (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004).

Karl Barth: Theologian of Christian Witness by Joseph Mangina forthcoming from Ashgate in October, 2004 provides an introduction to Barth's theology that is ecumenical in orientation and that draws on Barth's posthumous material.

Book Reviews

Act and Being: Towards a Theology of the Divine Attributes. By COLIN E. GUNTON. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003 (first published in 2002 in the UK by SCM Press). Pp. 162. \$29.00.

Act and Being: Towards a Theology of the Divine Attributes sets forth a bold and creative vision for construing the divine perfections. The fundamental aim of the book is to provide a pioneering roadmap of the divine attributes based on the triune God's activity in history. The entire enterprise can be viewed as a response to the kind of theology exemplified by Johannes Wollebius's distinction between the absolute and relative attributes: "God is known in himself and in his works. He is known in himself absolutely in his essence, relatively in the persons" (pp. 88-89). Gunton finds this distinction disastrous (p. 96), dividing the divine essence from the persons and championing the former over the latter (pp. 92, 96). As such, it bears traces of the tradition's tendencies in the direction of negative theology and modalism (pp. 88, 96).

Employing Irenaeus of Lyons' view of mediation, Gunton proposes that all of God's attributes must be conceived as the Father's actions through the mediation of his two hands—the Son and Spirit. The key in making use of Irenaeus's model is to highlight the particular forms of mediation without depriving the Son and Spirit of their distinctive work as "particular agents"

(pp. 144-145). How does Gunton get there, and what are the results?

Gunton opts for a theory of predication based on univocity rather than on analogy. As Gunton sees it, analogical predication “depends upon a (Neoplatonic) theory of degrees of being....” (p. 61). Gunton goes on to make three points concerning the “ontology and system of predication” bound up with negative theology. First, it depends upon projection from below rather than upon God’s revelation in history. Second, it pursues union with God apart from the mediation of Christ (p. 63). Third, this worldview stands opposed to the Christian doctrine of the goodness of creation, which is based on God’s involvement with the world in and through Israel’s history and Christ’s humanity. As such, it promotes a dualism between the spiritual and material. Given such disparity, the negative theology and its method of predication should have been rejected. Instead, it permeates classical treatments of the divine attributes (pp. 65-66).

Ever the dissenter, Gunton turns to another dissenter in the Western tradition—Duns Scotus—who claimed that words are to be used univocally to compare God and creatures—not that they are used “in exactly the same sense” (p. 69) but that, to quote Scotus, the object or concept of comparison “possesses sufficient unity in itself, so that to affirm and deny it of one and the same thing would be a contradiction” (p. 69). Gunton adds to this conception of language an explicit trinitarian frame of reference, namely, that words are vital creaturely means for speaking about the God who inhabits the world in Christ and who through the Spirit empowers language to bear witness to God through Christ (pp. 72-73).

Moving on from here, Gunton proceeds to discuss who God is in light of God’s triune activity in history (p. 76). At this point, Gunton sets forth “a Cappadocian summary” that provides the framework for his own account of the attributes: “...all of God’s acts take their beginning in the Father, are put into effect through the Son and reach their completion in the Spirit. Put otherwise, God’s actions are mediated: he brings about his purposes towards and in the world by the mediating actions of the Son and the Spirit, his ‘two hands’” (p. 77; cf. p. 113). Gunton offers a brief sketch of what such mediation looks like. The Son is the “focus” of God’s immanent actions within the world whereas the Spirit is the “focus” of God’s transcendent activity of taking the creation forward to its divinely intended end. Such a model will lead to a conception of the divine attributes rather different from the negative theological tradition since it takes seriously God’s actions in history as the basis for articulating the attributes rather than proceed by rejecting “the material features of createdness” (p. 78). What difference then does this particular trinitarian account of the perfections make?

In what follows, I will focus on four attributes discussed by Gunton: aseity, simplicity, impassibility and omnipotence. Aseity conveys the idea that “God has

his being entirely in and from himself.” One must conceive of aseity positively rather than negatively in view of “God’s movement outwards” toward the world through the two hands—the Son and Spirit. Thus, God’s aseity signifies the “integrity” of the creation as well as God’s sovereignty in redeeming it (p. 121). Like aseity, simplicity must be conceived positively in view of the Trinity (p. 122). So, while there is “absence of composition,” given the divine *perichoresis*, there is “unbroken” and “perfect” interpersonal communion (p. 122). So, too, the attributes in action of the triune God are distinct though inseparably related (pp. 122-123, 127). The attributes are not one and the same, just as the divine actions are not one and the same. Monotony and modalism are both ruled out. And yet, as was just indicated, they are not separate. Gunton takes quite seriously *opera ad extra trinitatis sunt indivisa*. As he sees it, all of God’s actions are initiated by the Father and mediated through the Son and Spirit (p. 139). What does this spell for divine impassibility?

Guarding against patipassianism on the one hand and a disregard for perichoretic action on the other hand, Gunton maintains that each person is involved in the Son’s suffering, albeit in different ways. Following Barth, Gunton’s God “has a heart” (p. 129). The Son suffers in that “he actively allowed himself to be passively subject to the principalities and powers” (p. 128). Now to the Spirit. The Spirit “enables Jesus’ suffering to be redemptive, to make it of eschatological significance, and therefore truly the Father’s sovereign action.” (p. 130). What about the Father? While the Father does not suffer on the cross, he both commands and suffers “his Son’s total identification with man under judgment” (p. 129). The end result is that God removes “suffering from the creation” (p. 130). For Gunton, God does not simply feel our pain. God overcomes it eschatologically through the Son and Spirit (p. 130).

The preceding account is noteworthy in that it both safeguards God’s deity and affirms God’s identification with humanity. Like Barth before him, Gunton’s God gives himself to us, yet without giving himself away (*CD IV/1*, 185). Having said that, two questions come to mind regarding Gunton’s project. First, on Gunton’s reading, how does the Son in particular relation to the other two persons truly give himself without giving himself away? Gunton does say that Christ gives himself over actively to suffer passively (p. 128). But to suggest, as Gunton does, that the cry of dereliction is “most simply...the cry of an Israelite expressing the self-distancing of that people from God as the result of their sin” does not go far enough (p. 131). There is no “rift in God,” as Gunton fears (p. 130), if it is also the cry of the Son of God, since “the Son is eternally the incarnandus,” as Gunton maintains (p. 127), who from all eternity was to take upon himself in his humanity—the humanity of God—our suffering and separation so as to remove them and make it possible for us to enter into communion with the triune God. This matter requires resolution so as to safeguard Gunton’s twin beliefs that “the three persons

are the being of God” (p. 112), and that God’s triune being is revealed in God’s acts, albeit in different ways. Concerning the latter, as was stated earlier, Gunton maintains that as the one God, the Father is the originator of all triune action toward the creation. The Son, on the other hand, is the divine person involved in the creation, while God the Spirit perfects the work of the Father and Son on behalf of the creation, taking it forward to its eschatological end (p. 113, cf. p. 139).

The second question is the flipside of the preceding. Is the incarnate Son omnipotent? Gunton is quite clear here. He claims that, “Jesus is not, as incarnate, omnipotent; but his life is the expression of God the Father’s omnipotent dealing with his creation through the life and death of his incarnate Son” (p. 153). Does this statement not undermine Gunton’s own conviction that God’s triune being is revealed in God’s acts in history? Otherwise, how would we know that the Father is omnipotent given Gunton’s own view that the Son reveals the Father through the Spirit (cf. p. 73)? And does Gunton not come dangerously close here to claiming that God’s Son—the mediatory hand in the creation—is not fully divine?

Now Gunton could say that the Son veils or limits his own omnipotence in his incarnate state to safeguard this conviction, but he does not. Even better would be to claim that Christ demonstrates the Father’s omnipotence through Christ’s own particular omnipotent action in the creation. In fleshing out the latter point, it will prove helpful to draw attention to two statements in Barth’s *Church Dogmatics*, which Gunton himself quotes from in this book. The first is actually a reference to Gregory of Nyssa: “the incarnation of the Word is not only not excluded by the divine nature but signifies its greatest glory” (p. 101). The second is taken from Barth’s response to Heinrich Vogel: “God gives himself, but he does not give himself away” (p. 110). In light of these claims, claims which Gunton himself wishes to affirm, is not the weakness of the cross the greatest demonstration of Christ’s own omnipotent glory in the triune act of God reconciling the world (cf. 1 Cor. 1:24)? If, on the other hand, the Son is not omnipotent in his incarnate state, as Gunton argues, does God not give himself away? And what would Gunton’s claim that the Son is not omnipotent in his humanity spell for Gunton’s particular concern for the relation of revelation and salvation, namely, that, “salvation depends on the unflinching affirmation that the God who meets us in the Son and the Spirit is the only God there is” (p. 93)? In the end, I would submit to Gunton that God’s omnipotence is revealed through the incarnate Son’s own particular demonstration of divine omnipotence through the weakness of the cross. Gunton’s claim that “Jesus is not, as incarnate, omnipotent” opens the door to the very real possibility that the omnipotence of the eternal God is not only greater than but also different from the supposed omnipotence we meet through Jesus Christ.

Having raised such questions as these, it only goes to show that landmark books do not usually tie up loose

ends, but serve to spur on those who would take up the central insights and develop them along lines that would be true to the overall intent of the program. Gunton’s work is to be hailed for the way in which it brings the trinitarian being of God in action to bear upon the discussion of the divine attributes in a uniquely innovative manner that calls the tradition back once again to its trinitarian faith.

Professor Gunton’s untimely passing in May 2003 means that he will not be able to tie up the loose ends. Nor will he be able to set forth the “extended account” of the divine perfections he envisioned (p. vii). Death has snatched from the church one of its most stimulating and penetrating theological minds and expansive hearts. And yet, those who have been impacted by this great man share his belief that God does not simply feel our pain and loss but has set about to overcome it through the suffering of the Son and perfecting work of the Spirit, thereby snatching victory from death’s jaws. And so, we are confident that this man who wrote at length about God’s two hands now rests in God’s hands until that day when God the Spirit takes creation to its perfected end.

PAUL LOUIS METZGER

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The Word of Christ and the World of Culture. Sacred and Secular through the Theology of Karl Barth. By PAUL LOUIS METZGER. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003. Pp. xxiii +252. \$38.00.

Luther once remarked that being able to draw proper distinctions was close to the heart of the theologian’s task. In this study of the place of culture in the theology of Karl Barth and, more fulsomely, of the value of Barth’s theology for thinking about culture christianly, Paul Metzger sets out the importance of the fundamental distinction—indeed diastasis—between God and the human creature which marks the Swiss theologian’s work. But Metzger also contends that what finally makes Barth a profound resource for theological reflection on human culture is that in his mature theology this radical distinction is always accompanied by an even more crucial connection—indeed synthesis—namely, the gracious embrace of all creaturely reality by the reality of God in Jesus Christ. The first third of Metzger’s study examines Barth’s account of the diastasis and synthesis of the “Word of Christ” and the “world of culture”. The final two-thirds move to explore the promises and perils of thinking through human cultural and political endeavor on the basis of their “dialectical inclusion” within the reality of God’s salutary Word. The result is a very helpful and constructive account of Barth’s potential significance for the task of orientating contemporary Christian life and thought in relation to the undertakings, achievements and claims of human culture.

In the two decades since the publication of Robert Palma's monograph *Karl Barth's Theology of Culture*, English-speaking reception of Barth's theology has been greatly advanced, not least by the work of George Hunsinger and Bruce McCormack. And Metzger's investigation makes good use of their insights in particular as he explores the development and internal logic of Barth's theology. Thus guided, Metzger contends that the heuristic key to getting Barth right on the matter of Christ and culture is to appreciate his recovery of the categories of neo-Chalcedonian Christology, and then to see his rendering of the relation between the Word of God and human culture as an analogous extension of this "Chalcedonian pattern". So, on one hand, the insoluble difference between the Word of Christ and human culture rules out any presumptuous "deification" of the latter; on the other hand, their inseparability makes any abstract "secularization" of the world of human culture and politics as a kind of autonomous sphere comprehensible without any reference to the divine, equally illegitimate. Between false identification and arbitrary alienation, the gospel makes space for a properly human culture, marked by the exercise of creaturely freedom and "authentic secularity" (81). As the disclosure of God's judgment on the pretenses of human sin, Christ is "against culture"; as the even more decisive enactment of God's gracious affirmation of humanity, Christ is "for culture". The space thus delimited is the arena in which human cultural and political activity occur, and over which stands the promise of the "humanization" that comes from the freedom from the twin defaults of idolatry and alienation. Metzger alerts us that the Christian posture within such an "authentic secularity" is characterized variously by Barth as "earnest play" and "confident despair". These paradoxical designations signal well the lively, discerning and taut venture of human existence freely engaged in hastening toward and awaiting the consummation of God's Reign.

Successive chapters unfold the details of the case, considering in turn Barth's early observations on theology and culture, the specifics of his appropriation of neo-Chalcedonian christology, the interplay between election, creation and redemption in Barth's theological vision, the arguments of several key essays in his political theology, and his remarkable little tracts on the music of Mozart.

Along the way, Metzger voices two hesitations about Barth's own capacity to draw out the promise of his own approach consistently. In chapter three, it is argued that Barth's view of creation is compromised by the fact that, "he so emphasizes redemption in Christ as the goal of creation that the distinctive reality of the creation is overshadowed by its ultimate redemption" (119), and this because he allows his supralapsarian doctrine of election to get the better of him. In chapter five, Metzger contends that in his analysis and approach to atheistic socialism Barth problematically underplays this same connection, thereby allowing the sacred

vocation of the church to be "overwhelmed" by the secular state (192). Such defaults notwithstanding, Metzger is convinced on the whole that Barth's theology serves the churches well by exemplifying how to "safeguard the distinction between God and the world, Christianity and broader culture, while also connecting the two spheres, the divine and the human, sacred and secular, in an integral manner" (233).

As this last sentence indicates, Metzger's argument modulates between attending to the relation between Christ and culture, and consideration of the relation between the Christian church and culture. The valences of certain terms tend to slip as this occurs. Consider for instance the category "sacred": its force as a predicate signaling the diastasis between Word and the world is subsequently diffused and somewhat awkwardly extended to characterize the relation between the church and the world, as "sacred and secular spheres" (157). The unhelpful effect of such conceptual slippage is brought home when Barth's talk of the Christian community and the civil community is allowed to volatilize into talk of "religious institutions" and secular states (186f.). In both instances the effect is to elide the abiding significance of Barth's theologische Religionskritik for his ecclesiology.

It may also be that Metzger's preferred categories inadvertently conspire to encourage an overly static view of the relation of the Word of Christ to human culture. The predominance of spatial tropes and ontological terminology may draw Christian discourse away from something Barth was so keen to emphasize: namely, that the relation between Christ and culture is always dynamic, and that diastasis and synthesis come about in and through the activity of the living God. The decisive divine "No" and even more decisive divine "Yes" to the human creature is, for Barth, always an event occurring within the contoured history of the outworking of the covenant of grace. The beauty and utility of hypostatic ontology must not occlude the fact that the structured relations that obtain between Christ and culture are ever graciously established; it must not obscure that such ontological categories bespeak nothing other than the unfailingly faithful gratuity of the God of the gospel towards his creatures. A different appreciation of the relation between election and history in Barth's theology than Metzger presents might help check any inadvertent drift toward staticism and allow better justice to be done to the actualism integral to Barth's thought.

At various points, further engagement with other relevant texts from Barth's corpus would pull, deepen and make more complex, certain aspects of the book's argument. For instance, Barth's occasional remarks on the ethos of music of Mozart which Metzger examines in chapter six would acquire a richer theological context if considered in relation to the accounts of play and art in §§17-18 of the *Ethics* (1928/29), where these topics emerge within Barth's discussion of the eschatological ethics of redemption. Similarly, Metzger's well rehearsed criticisms of Barth's stance vis-à-vis post-war

atheistic socialism would prove more convincing if they were made in a way that engaged his substantive interaction with the theology and leadership of the churches in the former GDR, his published correspondence with the Czech theologian, Josef Hromadka, as well as Barth's lively revisiting of the themes of human religion and atheism as two variants of our "ignorance of God in the world" in §77 of *The Christian Life*.

A most intriguing and important line of inquiry is opened up by remarks Metzger makes toward the end of the sixth chapter. Metzger wonders aloud whether Barth's claim that the creature rightly praises God simply by enacting its properly creaturely existence in the world can stand up in view the jeopardy into which creation is drawn by the presence of "radical evil". On this score, it seems that simple reference to creation *per se* is inadequate. But Barth has not, of course, been making any such simple appeal to such an abstract notion of "creation". Rather, as Metzger rightly observes, "those who have ears with which to hear" will find that the possibility of creaturely endeavor redounding properly to the glory of the God of the gospel rests finally upon "divine justification" since it is "only in light of the divine justification of the creation that the creation is deemed good and doubt is erased" (218). What we are alerted to here is that the relation of "dialectical inclusion" that exists between the Word of Christ and the world of human culture might also be thought through on the basis of the event of divine justification, in which the human creature is adjudged *simul justus et peccator*. Within the Reformed tradition, such a prospect should prove particularly fruitful given that not only persons, but also the accomplishments—be they cultural, political etc.—of justified persons are confessed to be the proper objects of divine justification. Christ's salutary agency as the justifying Word of God stands in obvious and vibrant proximity not only to our persons but also crucially to our cultural and political endeavors as well. Might an account of Christ and culture pursued along such lines ultimately be able to do better justice to the dynamic and concrete character of their interrelation, than can be achieved by an account focused chiefly upon analogous extension of the ontological constitution of Christ's person according to neo-Chalcedonian christology? Not only the title, but also the substance of Barth's exploration of human politics in his essay "Rechtfertigung und Recht" (unhelpfully rendered as "Church and State" in the English edition) certainly encourages the possibility of complimenting Metzger's instructive approach to the theology of culture under Barth's tutelage with another oriented by a no less christologically focused notion of two-fold justification.

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Karl Barth: Prophet of a New Christianity? By WILHELM PAUCK. New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1931. viii + 228 pages.

Several years ago I found this book in a used bookstore. I was unfamiliar with it, although I knew of Pauck's studies of Tillich and other subjects. A very early account of Barth's theology, *Karl Barth: Prophet of a New Christianity?* is interesting not only as a work by Pauck (1901-1981), but also because it reflects upon Barth's theology up to and including his late 1920s works, *Die christliche Dogmatik* and "Schicksal und Idee in der Theologie." In other words, Pauck concludes his book just short of the point where Barth found a fresh theological approach. *Fides Quaerens Intellectum*, in fact, also appeared in 1931.

Pauck's book seems to be little known. I checked a number of sources and found only two citations for Pauck's book, one by "our man" himself in 1932 (*Church Dogmatics I/1*, p. 254, concerning American preaching), and the other by Wilfried Härle in *Sein und Gnade* (1975). If readers know of other citations, let me know because I'm curious. Even if it were better known, the book has been superseded by subsequent studies like Balthasar (1951), Dr. Frei's dissertation (1956), Torrance (1961), Steven G. Smith (1983), Fisher (1988), Hunsinger (1991), McCormack (1995) and others, as well as the publication of other early works of Barth like the *Göttingen Dogmatics* and so on. Nevertheless Pauck's book provides a readable look at what we now call "early Barth," and it is well worth looking for.

Pauck announces that he wrote the book to satisfy American and British interest in continental theology. To give away the ending: Pauck does not think Barth meets the constructive needs of contemporary theology but he believes Barth offers an important corrective and his criticisms of liberal theology are irrefutable. In the first two chapters, Pauck describes the crisis of the contemporary religious situation. Christians confess Christ, yet are religiously perplexed. There is an absence of certainty among the religious; many, instead, are "seekers." In the recent history of religion (that is, the 19th and early 20th century), modern theology offered a choice from traditional Christianity, but modern theology jettisoned absolute religious truth. The theological development from Schleiermacher to Troeltsch removed the uniqueness of Christian revelation. Barth's theology of crisis represented a new alternative, since Barth allows revelation to return to center-stage.

Reviewing Barth's theology, Pauck surveys several early works, going back to the articles "Moderne Theologie und Reichgottesarbeit" and "Der Glaube an den persönlichen Gott" as he discusses his early influences, including Cohen and Herrmann. (Pauck passes briefly over Barth's socialism.) With the war, Barth rethought his theology and articulated the message "Recognize God as God!" in his *Romans*. Barth's theme of the reality of God is not the result of "war-psychology," as 1920s interpreters believed (p. 60), but a

new message, perhaps even a new Christianity. God's otherness is one side of this theology, and repentance is another; in fact, the word "repentance" "contains Barth's entire theology and ethics" (p. 128, emphasis in text).

Pauck surveys the development of "dialectical theology" in the second edition *Romans*, describing Barth's theology of God's otherness and the differences between Barth and his liberal forbearers. Finally Pauck spends two chapters discussing *Die christliche Dogmatik*. Here I think is one of the main historical strengths of this book. What does dialectical theology look like as dogmatic prolegomena? To summarize much too briefly: the reality of God's Word becomes knowable as reality-in-consciousness; yet Barth avoids the pitfalls of idealistic philosophy by maintaining God's transcendence and initiative. God's otherness creates a crisis in unredeemed human life, and human beings must relate to the transcendent God in repentance and faith (p. 171). But the existential method threatens to control Barth's theology (p. 172). Furthermore, Barth's phenomenological approach to traditional Christian theology becomes a modern kind of scholasticism (p. 218).

Is Barth a prophet of the new Christianity, as the title asks? No, says Pauck, nor is Barth a leader for the challenges of theology, too rooted is he in traditional supernaturalism. Imagine if Barth had retired or died after the *christliche Dogmatik*: no Anselm, "Nein!", Barmen, *Church Dogmatics*, and all else. Pauck's book depicts that Barth: a strange yet worthy voice in the wilderness (p. 220).

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Paul Stroble has written nine books and did his doctoral studies on Barth at the University of Virginia. He was privileged to take Dr. Hans Frei's Schleiermacher seminar at Yale.

The newly formed **Thomas F. Torrance Theological Fellowship** will meet on Friday November 19, 2004 in San Antonio, Texas after the Barth Society Meeting. Paul D. Molnar will present a paper entitled "Natural Theology Revisited: A Comparison of T. F. Torrance and Karl Barth". Elmer Colyer will respond. Details will follow in the fall Newsletter. Those wishing to become members should visit the Torrance Fellowship website: www.tfforance.org.

Cultural Encounters: A Journal for the Theology of Culture published by the Institute for the Theology of Culture: New

Wine, New Wineskins of Multnomah Biblical Seminary and edited by Paul Louis Metzger will publish its first issue in December, 2004 and in June and December thereafter. Visit www.culturalencounters.org for more information.

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Everyone interested in joining the Karl Barth Society of North America is invited to become a member by sending your name, address and annual dues of \$15.00 (\$10.00 for students) to:

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The Karl Barth Society is grateful to St. John's University for underwriting the production of the Newsletter.
